



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF THE CREEK INDIANS

The name of the Creek Indians, unlike the names of most of the more important Indian tribes, is obviously of English, not of Indian origin. It is usually said that it was given them by the English "on account of the numerous streams in their country."¹ This common-sense explanation sounds suspiciously made-to-order; it is, in point of fact, only a rough approximation of the truth. An examination of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century colonial records reveals a more precise origin for the term. Its etymology is, indeed, an epitome of the period of first contact between the eastern Muskogee and the English of Carolina.

From the beginnings of settlement in South Carolina the English were aware of the importance of the "Cussitaws" whom they knew only vaguely as a "powerfull Nation" seated somewhere inland beyond the Savannah river.² Although the proprietors in 1677 reserved to themselves a monopoly of the trade with the "Cussatoes" as well as with the Westo,³ it was probably not until after the destruction of the latter (1680-1681) that continuous relations were developed with their more distant rivals. When that first crisis was past the Carolina trade expanded rapidly southwestward. As early as 1685 the Chatta-

¹ Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians north of Mexico* (Bureau of American ethnology, *Bulletin*, number 30), part 1, p. 362. This and similar assertions are probably based ultimately upon the statement by James Adair, in his *History of the American Indians* (London, 1775), 257, that the Creek country was so called "on account of the great number of Creeks, or small bays, rivulets and swamps, it abounds with." But Adair was not a Creek trader; and, moreover, his career among the southern Indians began more than a quarter century after the name had come into common use.

² South Carolina historical society, *Collections*, 5: 446 *passim*. The identification of "Chufytachyqj yt fruitfule Province where the Emperour resides," visited by Henry Woodward in 1670, with Kasihta and DeSoto's Cofitachiqui, assumed by Langdon Cheves and accepted by J. R. Swanton (Mississippi valley historical association, *Proceedings*, 5: 153), is not improbable.

³ *Calendar of state papers, America and West Indies, 1677-1680*, 60.

hoochee river was crossed by the vanguard of the Carolinians under the explorer, Henry Woodward.⁴ The center of the southern trade, however, long remained about the forks of the Altamaha. The Indians of that region, the "Cussetas and Kawee-tas," became, in succession to the Westo and the temporarily dominant Savannahs, the central factor in the South Carolina Indian system. They were expressly mentioned, with the Cherokee and the Yuchi, in an act of 1691 laying an embargo on the trade with the distant Indians;⁵ while in 1693 they were described by a committee of the commons house of assembly as "our friends," and measures were advised to present the threatened settlement among them of the remnant of the hostile Westo.⁶ As "friends" of the English they were engaged, in the last decade of the century, in raids upon the Florida Indians, a fact which gave the authorities at St. Augustine frequent occasion for complaint, and which brought numerous Indian slaves to the Charles Town market.

Of the various expressions employed in the early English records to describe the inland Indians of the South Carolina-Florida frontier, such as "Cursitaws," "Cowataws and Cussetaws," "Ogamulgees," "Ochese"—names often applied loosely to the whole group, rather than specifically to certain towns or subdivisions of the eastern Muskogee—the last came to be the one in commonest use in the early years of the eighteenth century. Ocheese ("people") was in origin the Hitchiti term for their Muskhogean neighbors. Prior to the Yamasee war the chief towns of the Ocheese, Kawita, and Kasihta were located on the upper Ocmulgee river. As was frequently the case, the stream took the name of the folk, so that the Ocmulgee river above the approximate site of Macon, Georgia, was known to the English as "Ochese Creek."⁷ Thus in January, 1702, Governor James Moore counselled the assembly to "think of some way to confirm the Cussatoes w^{ch} live on Ocha-sa Creek & the Savannos in the Place they now live in, and to our friendship

⁴ William E. Dunn, *Spanish and French rivalry in the gulf region, 1678-1702* (*University of Texas bulletin*, number 1705), 71.

⁵ Cooper, *Statutes at large of South Carolina*, 2: 66.

⁶ Commons house journals, January 13-14, 1693 (manuscript at Columbia, South Carolina).

⁷ As shown on various eighteenth century maps, including Mitchell's map of North America of 1755.

they being the only People by whom we may expect Advice of an Inland Invasion.”⁸ Such was the importance of this locality in the South Carolina Indian system, not only as the center of the trade with the Indians between the Savannah and the Chatahoochee rivers, but also as a stage on the path to the Talapoosa, Alibamu, Abihka, and Chickasaw of the Louisiana frontier, and as the key to the defense of the southern border of the province, that Ochese creek was, to Carolinians at that epoch, the “Creek” *par excellence*. For example, the Indian commissioners set down in their journal in 1713 the proposal of the Yamasee that “the Cheehaws [Chiaha] who were formerly belonging to the Yamassees and now settled at the Creek might return.”⁹ In consequence the term “Ochese Creek Indians” often became, by abbreviation, often simply *Creeks*. An account of the Indians in South Carolina sent to the board of trade by Robert Johnson in 1720, which was, however, based on the journals of the Indian agents in the decade before the Yamasee war, gave the numbers and the location of “the Ocheses or Creeks.”¹⁰ The expressions were thus at first synonymous; and for a time the name Creek was strictly confined to the easternmost Muskogee. Their western kinsfolk and allies were called specifically “Alabamas,” “Talapoosas,” “Abihkas.” When, in 1707, an elaborate intrigue was set in motion by the provincial government to convert the Choctaw and Yazoo from the French to the English alliance, the Indian agent was warned by the assembly that the league would not be lasting unless formed “with the consent of the Creek and Talabushees Indians.”¹¹ Again, when the assembly was planning, in 1709, to collect a force of Indians to protect the settlements in an expected emergency, provision was made for raising 150 Indians “among the Severall Towns of the Creek Indians proportionably,” and in addition “50 from the Talibouses and Alabamas.”¹² Soon, however, the western Muskogee, with whom the English were in close alliance against the French and their allies in the period

⁸ Commons house journals, January 14, 1702.

⁹ Indian commissioners’ journal, March 25, 1713 (manuscript at Columbia, South Carolina).

¹⁰ Public record office, Board of trade papers, Proprieties, 10, Q: 201 (transcript at Columbia, South Carolina).

¹¹ Commons house journal, November 22, 1707.

¹² *Ibid.*, April 23, 1709.

of Queen Anne's war, came to be included in the popular designation of Creeks. Apparently the complaint of Captain Musgrove in 1710 "that the Creek Indians owe him" [for ammunition] "since they went to war against the Choctaw Indians" was directed against the western group.¹³ As early as 1712 a distinction in term was made between the western and eastern Creeks, which became thereafter the stereotyped English usage, when the Indian commissioners instructed their agent to adjust affairs among "the upper and lower Creeks."¹⁴

From a survey of contemporary allusions it is apparent that the name Creek was first applied by the English to those members of the Muskhogean group with whom they were first in contact, the Indians who lived on or near the upper Ocmulgee, i. e., "Ochese on Creek;" that it was derived from the expression Ochese Creek Indians; and that as the familiarity of the Carolinians with the western members of the great southern confederacy increased, the popular name was extended to them, losing in the process its original specific connotation.

VERNER W. CRANE

A LETTER FROM NEW MADRID, 1789

The letter from New Madrid of April 14, 1789, is here reprinted from the text as it appears in the *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* of August 27, 1789. In Houck's *History of Missouri*, 2:112-115, extracts are printed from a joint letter of Major McCully, Colonel Shreve, Colonel Christopher Hays, Captain Light, Captain Taylor, John Dodge, David Rankin, John Ward, John Stewart, James Rhea, Captain Hewling and others, addressed to Dr. John Morgan of Philadelphia, dated New Madrid, April 14, 1789. Houck says this was published in Philadelphia, but gives no reference; he thinks that it was this letter which led Madison to write to Washington that it "contained the most authentic and precise evidence of the Spanish project that has come to my knowledge." From the evidence it appears, however, that it was the circular of Morgan, issued in the fall of 1788, calling for settlers, which was the subject of Madison's statement to Washington. The circular is printed in full in Hunt's *Madison*, 5:331, in connection with the letter to

¹³ Indian commissioners' journal, October 28, 1710.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1712.